



■ Station role – Suzanne Linggood

Suzanne's clean sweep to the top

A DEDICATED rail employee has now worked at all 26 stations on the c2c line – and undertaken every job on her way to the top.

Suzanne Linggood, 39, is a familiar face to the thousands of customers who travel on the network each day, having notched up 17 years with the company.

Suzanne, of Ilfracombe Road, Southend, started off as a trainee in the ticket office, but has worked her way up to group station manager, based at Fenchurch Street.

The mum to Jarod, 13, and Kofi, 11, had one last job to undertake, a cleaning shift at Limehouse station in East London, to complete her tally of working at all the stops.

She said: "I started in the ticket office and worked my way up, but I had one last thing to do and that was cleaning the platform!"

"I wouldn't change my job for anything. I meet new people all the time and every day is different."

Mrs Linggood now oversees stations including Fenchurch Street,

Essex church leaders unite in support of embattled travellers

Halt the Dale Farm evictions – bishops

By MELISSA HILLS
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ESSEX'S Anglican and Catholic church leaders have united in a last-minute call to halt the eviction of 96 traveller families from Dale Farm.

Stephen Cottrell, the Church of England Bishop of Chelmsford, and Thomas McMahon, Roman Catholic Bishop of Brentwood, issued a joint statement highlighting their concerns over the upcoming eviction of the travellers at the Crays Hill site.

Travellers living on the illegal site have been told to leave by August 31 or face eviction.

The bishops said: "We are particularly concerned that breaking up this long-standing and close-knit community and its way of life will be a serious trauma for all concerned, and especially the children who have stability and support at the excellent Crays Hill Primary School that most of them attend."

"While we recognise that travellers, like others, are not above the law, nevertheless, half the Dale Farm site is already recognised as lawful and it would seem to the benefit of all to authorise the adjoining site rather than spend millions on eviction in these days of austerity and cutbacks."

Basildon Council agreed earlier



■ Stephen Cottrell – leader of the Anglican church in Essex

er this year to spend up to £8million towards the eviction, which could cost up to £18million when police and other costs are added.

Mr Cottrell told the Echo: "There are more than 90 families on the site and many children. Many of them are Christians and we will be there to support them."

"They are going to be thrown out of their homes in a few weeks and though they are not above the law, common sense has to



■ Thomas McMahon – head of the Catholic church in Essex

take hold.

"We are calling for Basildon Council to look at this again and see what can be done to find a permanent solution instead of just moving the problem on."

"Every person in society should look at this and think this is not the kind of society they want to live in, I do not want to be part of that."

"These are human lives we are talking about, and moving them

is just going to create another problem somewhere else."

The bishops have pledged to visit the site on Tuesday, August 30, the day before the deadline runs out.

A spokesman for Basildon Council said: "No one wants a forced clearance of this site and we have spent ten years asking the travellers to work with us to seek a peaceful resolution."

"However, it is important to remember that Basildon Council has a policy to protect its green belt from inappropriate development and its actions at Dale Farm are a clear example of the law being applied equally and fairly to all people."

"If we do not take action in this case, we would have little moral right as a planning authority to take action against future unauthorised developments."

"That would set a very dangerous precedent."

Breaking up this close-knit community will be a serious trauma, especially for the children



Mum to sell house to free her son

THE mother of one of two men stuck in a Spanish jail accused of attempted murder is selling her house to fund the men's fight for freedom.

Sharon Harris, the mother of Kyle Thain, 24, who is in prison in Alicante, with his 29-year-old friend, James Harris, has revealed legal expenses for the pair have already topped £10,000.

Mrs Harris, 56, who has been staying in Spain to support her son, returned to the UK last week. She says she and taxi driver husband, David, 58, have no choice but to sell their home in Brunswick Road, Southend.

Meanwhile a man who was with the two men on their troubled trip to Spain is also fundraising to help fund their legal battle.

Two cyclists and one runner travelled from Basildon station to Adventure Island on Sunday, on another fundraising event.

Joe Elliot, 24, of Bellevue Road, Southend, was with the two men on the trip, but was not arrested.

Victim's crash plea

A WOMAN who was left injured when her car was hit by a stolen Mercedes has appealed for help to bring the crooks to justice.

Dawn Anderson, 42, of Wavertree Road, Benfleet, was in her red Ford Fiesta when it was hit by a silver Mercedes coupe, near Tarpots roundabout, in London Road, Benfleet.

Mrs Anderson was left with bruises and blood pouring from a cut on her forehead.

She thinks the Mercedes was travelling at least at 80mph.

Boy, 12, arrested

A SCHOOLBOY has been arrested on suspicion of stealing a purse from a disabled woman. The lad, 12, is believed to have been part of a three-pronged Polish gang of thieves who targeted their victim on Southend's seafront.

Police suspect they preyed on the wheelchair-bound woman, who had her purse containing more than £100 stolen, outside the Sealife centre at about 3.30pm on Sunday.

Officers promptly used CCTV to follow three suspects up the High Street.

DEADLINE DAY



■ Confronted by police – Len Gridley as he was arrested by police on the weekend

Picture: PAUL WATSON BA48885_20

Cops take neighbour's gun

By JON AUSTIN
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A CAMPAIGNER against the Dale Farm site has had his shotgun confiscated by police, after he was arrested for making threats against the travellers.

Len Gridley, 52, of Oak Road, Crays Hill, was held for nearly 12 hours on Saturday, after he tried to set fire to tarpaulins wrapped around a scaffold barricade, set up beside his back fence by protesters.

Mr Gridley, whose home backs on to the massive illegal Dale Farm site, where travellers face eviction next month, also leaked raw sewage from his septic tank

“This has left me with no protection on my own property. I feel vulnerable

on to the ground the barricade stood on, in the hope it would be removed.

He was arrested for threatening to cause criminal damage, and bailed until October 23.

He has been campaigning against the illegal development of the site since 2001, and is locked in a war of words with the 96 families.

Mr Gridley said he went back

to the police station to lodge an official complaint, claiming travellers who had made threats of violence against him have never been arrested.

When he returned, officers were waiting to take away his shotgun, which he is licensed to keep.

Before his arrest, it had been removed from its case, but not from his workshop, according to Mr Gridley. He said: “I will be taking legal advice.

“This has left me with no protection on my own property. I feel vulnerable.

“I have repeatedly faced death threats – even on national television. Last month, on a BBC documentary, there were more

threats I would be dragged from my car by a group of men and hit with knuckle dusters when they do the eviction.

“The people who said that on camera have never been arrested, but I have.”

Essex Police said it was not unusual for firearms to be temporarily seized when an incident occurs involving a certificate holder.

A spokesman said: “A 52-year-old man, currently on bail on suspicion of making threats to cause criminal damage at Crays Hill on Saturday, has had his lawfully held firearms temporarily seized, pending consideration of the revocation of any certificates.”



■ Blocked off – Ford's Sports and Social

Businesses barricading land

LANDOWNERS and businesses across Essex have been taking precautions amid fears the evicted Dale Farm travellers could camp on their land.

Land as far away as Colchester and Chelmsford has been barricaded to stop convoys of caravans moving on to public land. Yesterday, the gates at the Ford's Sports and Social Club, in Gardiners Close, Basildon, were padlocked shut.

Farm machinery and the club's van, complete with a clamp on the front wheel, were moved to block off both entrances to the ground.

ground ahead of the possible eviction.

Last year, families evicted from the Hovefields travellers site, Wickford, by Basildon Council, headed straight to the Selex Sports and Social Club ground, in Gardiners Way, Basildon.

The travellers then pulled up in Gardiners Close, staying there until the police evicted them.

Essex County Council said any illegal camping by the Dale Farm travellers would not be tolerated.

A spokesman said: “If there is an unauthorised encampment on county council land, or the public highway, our

“This can allow up to 28 days of toleration.

“These conditions limit the permitted size of the encampment, and would not tolerate encampments on land required for public purposes, such as school playing fields or country parks.

“If there is an encampment on land held by district and borough councils, the individual codes of those authorities would kick in.”

However, neither the borough, district nor county council would be involved in the eviction of travellers on private land.

The spokesman added: “For privately-owned land, this

LOOMS OVER CAMP

Movie star to visit travellers as Dale Farm faces eviction

By EMMA PALMER
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FILM star Vanessa Redgrave is to visit Dale Farm today – just 24 hours before the deadline for the travellers to leave.

The actress, 74, known for her political activism, will travel to the site in Crays Hill to show “solidarity and support” for the 90 traveller families who are facing being evicted from the green-belt land.

Redgrave, and her brother Corin, have been long term supporters of the illegal travellers camp at Dale Farm.

Corin, who died last year, suffered a heart attack in 2005 while pleading with Basildon councilors not to vote for the destruction of the site, off Oak Road.

“I am sure the eviction of the Dale Farm traveller families is illegal under human rights conventions

tion of the site, off Oak Road. Academy award winner Redgrave is also a Unicef goodwill ambassador.

She has campaigned for a variety of causes over the years.

She is expected to arrive at the site at about 5.30pm, to meet the 90 traveller families as well as the 150 supporters from across the world, who amassed at the area on Saturday.

The supporters have set up a protest camp called “Camp Constant”.

Redgrave, who starred in films Atonement and 1977 Oscar-winning film Julia, said she was appalled by the decision to evict the travellers.

She said: “The UK signed and ratified the UN convention on



■ On our screens – Vanessa Redgrave in TV's Day of the Triffids

the rights of the child. I am certain the eviction of the Dale Farm traveller families is illegal under international, mandatory, human rights conventions.

“I am appalled such an eviction can be upheld by our government.”

In 2005, when the eviction of Dale Farm was first announced by Basildon Council, Redgrave and her brother, Corin Redgrave,

vowed to create a human shield to protect the women and children of Dale Farm from the bulldozers.

The travellers have until midnight tomorrow to move off the site and comply with a “notice to quit” order, otherwise the council will send in bailiffs and dismantle the camp.

A date for the eviction has not been made public.



■ Previous meeting – Dale Farm spokesmen Richard Sheridan and Grattan Puxon, with Vanessa and Corin Redgrave

WOMEN PEN EMOTIONAL PLEA TO QUEEN

WOMEN living at Dale Farm have written to the Queen in another attempt to get the eviction stopped.

In an open letter to the monarch from long-term camp resident Mary Anne McCarthy, and fellow members of the Women of Oak Lane Community group, they warn they will “hang themselves from the gateposts” if the bailiffs move in.

The letter states: “We have cried out to many people to help us, but nobody’s been able to stop the council doing

“We have a lot of children, 72, in the local Crays Hill school.

“We are very proud of our children and value their education.

“We have many old people with cancer, heart disease and other health problems, and children with hearing problems needing regular medical care.

“If the council evicts us, we will lose all our possessions, our homes, our school, everything.

“Three of our women don’t want to be dragged from their

homes and move to go into care.

“So they say they will hang themselves from the gateposts if we are evicted and made homeless.”

The letter, begging the Queen to get involved, adds: “Dear Majesty, we have young women here on income support, who will have to see their young children put up for adoption.

“Without an address and homeless, they get no benefits, and so their children will be taken into care. Families will be broken.”

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Left, activists at Camp Constant yesterday in support of Irish Travellers under threat of eviction from Dale Farm, centre, in Crays Hill, Essex. Right (l-r), Mary Sheridan and her daughters, Michelle and Nora. JASON ALDEN

Travellers defy eviction with High Court hearing

Grandmother 'prepared to die' rather than swap her lifestyle for town-centre bricks and mortar

By Emily Dugan

Defenders of the UK's largest Traveller site said yesterday they had launched an "eleventh hour" legal bid to stop a controversial eviction that is expected within weeks. A last-ditch injunction will be heard by a High Court judge on Wednesday to stop hundreds of people being forcibly removed from the camp at Dale Farm in Essex. Lawyers are seeking an injunction because there is still a case pending in the High Court which argues Basildon council has a duty to find Travellers alternative land – rather than bricks and mortar flats. The full hearing is scheduled to be heard in November.

Although Dale Farm residents legally own the former scrapyard where they live, around half of the 100 pitches do not have planning permission to be on site, which is in Basildon's green belt. More than 300 people, including 110 children, face eviction.

Bailiffs for Basildon Council can arrive legally on the site to begin evictions from midnight on Wednesday.

The lawyers are acting on behalf of grandmother Mary Sheridan, 71, who has lived on site with her family for 10 years and faces eviction despite suffering from chronic lung disease.

Speaking yesterday she said: "I've never lived in a home. I've been a Traveller all my life and that's the way I want to end my life. Where will I go to if they put us on the road?" She believes the stress of eviction killed her husband, Jonathan, who died of a heart attack last November. "He was terrified of moving on. He said he didn't want to see another court again. It's a life-and-death situation. We're prepared to die here."

Keith Lomax, her solicitor, said: "People have been offered flats by the council, but they can't live there without having a very serious impact on their health. Few people understand the extent of what it means if you have never lived in bricks and mortar and have always lived a certain way."

If eviction goes ahead but Mrs Sheridan wins her case, Basildon may be



forced to find new land or pay compensation. It could cost the council up to £20m in bailiff and police fees. Police riot teams have been preparing for months at the Essex police training school and "move on" teams have been specially prepared to stop those evicted from settling close by. Steve Horgan, Basildon Council's deputy leader, said: "Nobody wants to evict anybody; it's a horrible thing to do, but we enforce against anybody who builds in the green belt."

Supporters said yesterday they would permanently defend the site to prevent its destruction. Grattan Puxon, said: "We feel this is a civil defence issue; we are the home guard." Support for the Travellers' cause has drawn support from countries that include Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.

The atmosphere on the site is already tense, and many living at the camp say they are prepared to "die fighting" for their home. Gas canisters and petrol soaked hay bails are already being prepared as burning barricades against eviction.

Local residents remain opposed. One nearby resident, a housewife who spoke from behind a reinforced gate, said: "It's devalued our property by half. I've been here 17 years and it makes me so upset. You can't get a taxi to come here any more, BT won't come without a police escort and even Argos won't deliver. There's one rule for them and one for us, and all these do-gooders support them. I wish they'd leave, but I don't think they ever will."

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